CC and CC+ Overview for the World Wide Web

http://creativecommons.org/projects/ccplus

Creative Commons (CC) provides free copyright licenses which empower authors and creators to mark their creativity with the freedoms they intend it to carry. In this document we describe conceptually a technology we've developed to enable a simple click-through to rights or opportunities beyond those offered in the standard CC licenses. With this capability, it is simple for rights holders to marry standard CC licenses with other options beyond those provided within a CC license. For example, a licensor offering content under a CC BY-NC license (requiring attribution, but restricting use to noncommercial use only) could specify a broker (like a third party service on a website) that would handle commercial rights associated with the content. Because CC licenses are non-exclusive, there is no Creative Commons-based limit to such multi-licensing.

Background

Creative Commons is a Massachusetts non-profit corporation that offers free copyright licenses to creators who want to clearly mark their content with certain freedoms. These licenses release some of the exclusive rights granted automatically by copyright law to the general public, while reserving other rights to the copyright holder – thus its slogan, "Some Rights Reserved."

Using the CC infrastructure, copyright holders may grant others the freedom to:

1. **Share** their work, or
2. **Remix** their work, or
3. **Both.**

These freedoms may be conditioned, or limited, by:

4. Limiting such uses to **non-commercial** activities, or
5. Requiring adopters **share-alike** – meaning derivatives of the original work must be licensed in a similar way, or
6. **Both.**

These choices are then represented through a CC license icon on the web that:

1. **Displays the freedoms** offered,
2. **Links to a "Commons Deed"** that explains the freedoms in a human-readable way.
3. **Links to a license** that enforces the freedoms, and
4. **Links to metadata** that describes the freedoms in a machine-readable way.

For example, an artist might license a song on his web page. That webpage would display the CC license icon

with code that is linked to a "Commons Deed":

In the four years since its launch, Creative Commons has become the preeminent "user-generated content" licensing entity. The project has sister projects in over 70 jurisdictions around the world, each working to port its core licenses to local law; 40 of those countries have completed their work to date. License uptake has in turn grown dramatically in scope and quantity. CC licences are now being used by everyone from bloggers to major label artists.

As CC has grown, it has developed closer relationships with important content and application companies. Six Apart integrated Creative Commons licenses into their blogging software early on. Flickr has included CC licensing options in its photo service from the start. Online video sites blip.tv and Revver have both integrated CC licenses into video uploads while YouTube has integrated a system called "audioswap" to enable YouTube users to draw upon Creative Commons licensed content to produce their own video content and "swap" out audio files found to be used illegally. And the list goes on, as Creative Commons has worked with Microsoft, Google, Yahoo!, Apple and many other companies working to lower the transaction cost associated with sharing and re-use of content in the new world.

CC+

In its initial development, Creative Commons focused upon the "sharing economy." Its objective has always been to provide a legal framework to protect content intended by its copyright holder to be shared or remixed freely. The objective so far has not been to facilitate the cross-over from the "sharing economy" to the "commercial economy." Nothing in the CC charter opposed such a cross-over; indeed, the messaging around Creative Commons encouraged it.

But nothing in the architecture of the CC infrastructure enabled a simple way for artists to signal and embed the ability to link the "sharing economy" to a "commercial economy."

In December, 2006, this limit began to change. Creative Commons announced a beta protocol that would enable CC licensed content to be directly linked to commercial uses of that content. Using this protocol, CC licensed content could include links to rights or uses beyond those provided by the Creative Commons license. And, while CC will never itself provide those commercial links, it will enable others to use this CC+ infrastructure to leverage commercial value out of otherwise freely distributed content.

With this new protocol, for example, a musician might license a song under a CC BY-NC-ND license – encouraging people to noncommercially share the song, but not to remix it, or otherwise make derivatives of the work. Using this new infrastructure, however, the artist may indicate a simple way that people could link back to a commercial site to secure rights beyond those granted automatically. The "Commons Deed" signals that ability through a new icon, and a link from that icon to the appropriate site.

Thus, the Commons Deed now looks like this:

Clicking on the "permissions beyond" icon would then take you to a commercial site – again, not run by Creative Commons – where the terms for the rights beyond those granted by CC licenses could be negotiated. In this example, the Pump Audio link looks like this:

There is no limit to the commercial opportunities that might be specified beyond those in the CC license. The CC+ link could be to a site that offers one the ability to purchase a CD or t-shirt with a specific photo that is licensed under a Creative Commons license. Or, this CC+ link additionally could be to an agency that sells commercial rights to that photo. The protocol is a general facility to link CC licensed work with commercial opportunities. Anyone may use this protocol to enable hybrid creativity (See "CC+ Technical Implementation" document).

This new protocol offers an obvious opportunity for Creative Commons licensed content to provide competition to proprietary commercial content. Because the infrastructure permits any rights organization or agent to be named to handle rights beyond those granted by the CC license, CC+ encourages competition among these organizations or agencies. Since CC+ gives creators a way to monetize uses beyond the non-commercial sharing enabled by the Internet, CC+ encourages artists to make their work available using this infrastructure. Finally, because the CC licenses have become pervasive standards with large-scale adoption for user-generated content licenses, organizations trying to build businesses around such content will have an obvious incentive to use the standards set by Creative Commons rather than reinventing the wheel by building their own.

More Information

Please visit http://creativecommons.org/

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